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**SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT IN THE BEAUTY SECTOR IN PORTUGAL  
COMPARING BEAUTY OPINION LEADERS WITH BEAUTY BRANDS?**

**Rita Marlene Castro Oliveira**

**2360**

A Project carried out on the Master in Management Program, on the L'Oréal Brandstorm Field  
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to compare the way people (beauty products consumers/lovers) engage with beauty brands and beauty OLs on social media.

In order to make this comparison a number of cosmetic brands offering skin care products and/or color cosmetics in the mass segment in Portugal and owning a Portuguese Facebook page were selected in order to measure and study the level of engagement on the mentioned pages. The same methodology was used to measure the level of engagement achieved by Portuguese beauty OLs. For the purpose of this analysis the definition of social media engagement taken into consideration was the one used by Facebook.

**Keyword:** Social media engagement, Social media marketing, Portuguese beauty bloggers, Color cosmetics brands, Skin care brands

## INDEX

ABSTRACT .....	2
INDEX .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	4
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
The global beauty market – geographic overview .....	4
The global beauty market – consumer trends.....	5
The global beauty market – distribution trends.....	6
Beauty industry in Portugal.....	6
Social networks penetration – a global overview.....	7
Social media advertising worldwide .....	7
Social media engagement definition .....	8
Social media networks worldwide – the most important platforms.....	9
User engagement on Facebook worldwide .....	10
Why customer engagement is important.....	10
Stages of the customer lifecycle – Where does social media come in? .....	12
The role of Opinion Leaders (OL) in the marketing strategy .....	12
METHODOLOGY .....	14
RESULTS .....	15
Analyzing the presence of beauty brands on Facebook in Portugal .....	15
Analyzing the presence of beauty OLs on Facebook in Portugal .....	18
LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH.....	21
Limitations .....	21
Further research.....	22
REFERENCES .....	23

## INTRODUCTION

The beauty market can be divided into 5 business segments: skincare, haircare, color cosmetics, fragrances and toiletries. These segments can be further divided into premium and mass products. The mass segment represented 72% of the market in 2010. In the same year, skincare was the most relevant segment and color cosmetics came in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Both were growing at a significant pace following the 2009 recession slowdown. In Portugal, these 2 segments are forecasted to keep growing. The leading company in both segments is L'Oreal.

From 2000 to 2010, the distribution channel with the most significant increase in terms of share was the non-store retailing (which includes direct sales and online sales).

There has been a growing importance of the digital communication channels in this market and their share in the communication budget of beauty brands has registered a steady growth, namely in online recommendations and social media. However, there are few studies about the impact of these new media (effects and ROI), and this is the gap that this project aims to cover.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The global beauty market – geographic overview**

The global beauty care market can be divided into five segments: skincare, haircare, color cosmetics (make-up), fragrances and toiletries. From 2000-2013 it registered a 4.5% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) with annual growth rates ranging from 3% to 5.5%. (LOPACIUK & ŁOBODA, 2013). Although this industry was affected by the 2009 recession, 2010 marked a strong recovery and in 2015 the industry grew 4.5% despite the slowdown in emerging markets. (RESEARCH AND MARKETS, 2015) In 2010, the mass segment represented 72% of total sales and it is expected to drive future growth. (see Appendix 1 – Figure 1.1)

At the moment, Asia Pacific is leading globally in terms of revenues (34% in 2014). The region is followed by Western Europe and North America. The emerging markets are leading in terms of growth. In 2011 they generated 81% of the global growth. BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) represent the main force among the group accounting for 54% of the growth attributed to them (emerging markets). In 2010 the BRIC represented alone 21% of the global beauty industry market value, a share estimated to increase to 25% by 2015. (EUROMONITOR, 2011)

In 2014, the global cosmetic market was worth 460 billion USD, a number expected to reach 675 billion by 2020, growing at a rate of 6.4%, (RESEARCH AND MARKETS, 2015).

In 2010, skincare was the most significant segment in the beauty market. This growth was driven primarily by the increasing demand of whitening products in the Asian market and anti-aging products in developed countries (EUROMONITOR, 2011).

Color cosmetics has kept a constant third place since 1998 and it is expected to reach USD 77.70 billion by 2020 (see Appendix 1 – Figure 1.2). Presently, North America and Europe are the leading regions in terms of consumption. However, Asia-Pacific is expected to dominate the market together with Europe by 2020. (RESEARCH AND MARKETS, 2015) The color cosmetics growth is fueled mostly by innovations which explains why even in mature markets the segment attained 8% of market growth in 2008.

### **The global beauty market – consumer trends**

The 2009 recession has influenced the **industry consumption patterns** (although some trends were visible before already). The post-recession consumer is value seeking, digital, permanently connected, and experience-focused (EUROMONITOR 2011). On top of this, the following emerging trends can be highlighted: (i) **home consumption**; (ii) **product diversification**; (iii) **mass product lines perceived as prestigious** in mature markets – consumers are more aware that

some mass products provide the same quality as luxury especially among color cosmetics and skincare products; (iv) **e-commerce** - in 2010, more than 11 billion USD worth of sales were made online.

### **The global beauty market – distribution trends**

The **non-store retailing share increased 6% from 2000 to 2010**. This channel includes direct and online sales. In 2010, the online channel's share in cosmetics sales reached 3% worldwide (see Appendix 1 – Figure 1.3) and 7.5% in South Korea - the biggest online sales market. This share is expected to keep growing. Also noteworthy is the continuous growth of hypermarkets and supermarkets share, a trend coherent with the rising share of the mass segment.

### **Beauty industry in Portugal**

In 2015, **L'Oreal Portugal Lda was the leading company both in color cosmetics and skin care in Portugal**, with a 20% and 24% value share in these industries, respectively. The company offers a diversity of premium and mass-market brands across different channels.

The prospect is for the **color cosmetics segment to keep growing** fostered by the increasing purchase frequency and the product penetration growth in Portugal. A **similar trend** is likewise predicted for **the skin care segment** – expected to grow at 3% CAGR (despite the 2% decline in 2015). This growth will be boosted by the increased complexity of daily skin care routine and the continuous new launches. Portuguese consumers are also transferring their purchases from premium beauty specialist retailers such as perfumeries to chemists/pharmacies and drugstores/parapharmacies – where they can find more affordable offers of well-known and quality brands (EUROMONITOR, 2016)

## Social networks penetration – a global overview

Nowadays, more than 3.17 billion people have access to the internet worldwide. In 2015, there were 3.010 billion internet active users worldwide, 69% of which were also social network users (2.08 Billion). (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.1). In Europe, there were 584 million internet active users (70% of the total population) and 387 million social media accounts - 66% of the total active internet users (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.2).

As of January 2014, 40% of all European internet users were monthly active social media users while 48% of all Portuguese internet users logged into social media at least once (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.3). These figures are expected to grow as a result of mobile device usage growth and mobile social networks. **Women spend more time on social media than men.** In June 2015, European women logged into social media via desktop connections an average of 6.58 hours per month (compared to 4.53h worldwide) whereas European men were connected for 5.57h (compared to a 3.77h average worldwide) (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.4)

## Social media advertising worldwide

Social media advertising includes paid advertising appearing within social networks.<sup>1</sup> **This number has been growing considerably worldwide** both in absolute and in relative terms (to the total ad spending and to the digital ad spending) and this trend is estimated to continue. In 2014 the spending grew 56.2% worldwide representing 12.2% of all digital ad spending. By 2017, the forecast is for the share of social network ad spending to represent 34.5% of all digital spending. Facebook dominates the landscape worldwide. In 2015 the company gathered 65.5% of all social network ad spending. (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.5).

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<sup>1</sup> It does not include revenue generated from membership-subscriptions or premium fees or expenses related with the development or maintenance of a social network presence.

**When compared to similar countries, Portugal is not a mature market.** By the end of 2015, social media advertising revenue in Portugal was expected to reach 40 million US dollars whereas in Spain the expectation was 249 million US dollars and in the UK 1,294 million (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.6).

Two problems are commonly identified by business managers on social media marketing implementation: (i) it is **impossible to measure the campaign impact** and (ii) **businesses do not understand the value of social media engagement and how it affects them.** (FUSIONFARM, 2014)

According to a Social Media Examiner report, although 92% of marketers inquired agree that social media is important to their business, when asked if they were able to measure the ROI of their social media activities, only 42% said yes. Moreover, the question most want to see answered “How do I measure the return on my social media marketing” – for 88% this was the top of mind question (SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMINER, 2015).

According to another survey 66.5% of the enquired executives stated they were not confident on their ability to measure the effect of their companies’ social media usage. (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.7).

The same poll found that the **most common KPI used was “activity and engagement with profiles”** – mentioned by 48,7% of the executives. This KPI was followed by **web traffic** (47.3%), **increase in followers - likes/fans** (47%), **reach** (31.6%) and **sharing** (27.1%) (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.8).

### **Social media engagement definition**

**There is little consensus in defining engagement and thereafter implementing engagement initiatives in the business world. This lack of consensus is conveyed to social media**



**engagement.** According to Alex York, from Sprout Social engagement requires time and should not be seen as single isolated interactions: “it is an open line of communication over a period of time (...) it’s about how companies use networks like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to create a great customer experience” (SPROUT SOCIAL, 2014).

Jason Falls argues that “engagement should consider the **passive audience who simply watches, reads, learns and occupies their mind with Facebook statuses or Instagram posts**, even if just for a moment, **and not only those who comment, like or share.**” Although, he believes that a reaction reflects a greater level of engagement, he defends that holding people’s attention should also be taken into consideration, which is why he argues that brands should not look at engagement as a metric of likes and shares hence producing posts that will get more likes and shares (FALLS, 2012). Social media networks have their own definition of engagement according to specific features and functionalities. Facebook defines engagement as the number of actions related to a post (likes, comments, shares). For Instagram, this means mentions, comments and hashtags.

### **Social media networks worldwide – the most important platforms**

**Facebook is the most popular social network platform worldwide** based on total active users and global reach. It was the first platform to surpass the 1 billion users mark (in the third quarter of 2012). As of April 2016 Facebook had 1.59 billion active users (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.9 and Figure 2.10) and, since May 2014, figures show that 38.6% of the online population worldwide have accessed the social network at least once per month. In Western Europe the figure was 50.3% (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.11).

**Facebook is also the most commonly used social media platform among marketers.** Almost all (97%) of the B2C marketers use the platform professionally, while the number is 89% for B2B

marketers. For both, it is the most important social platform (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.12). In the B2C market, **Facebook is followed by twitter and Youtube.**

In the beauty industry the scenario is similar. **The most popular network is Facebook** while **Instagram is getting increasingly popular** (with a 40% penetration among socially active brands and 67% for luxury brands) (STATISTA, 2014).

**Online video content is one of the most important social media marketing tools for beauty brands especially for color cosmetics.** As of April 2015, from the 45.3 billion beauty-related content video views on youtube, 9.8 billion consisted of makeup videos, most of which generated through beauty vloggers rather than through official brand accounts.

On November 2015, Dove was the most popular beauty brand in the world on Facebook based on the number of followers (over 24 million). Among the brands analyzed for the purpose of this thesis, L'Oreal Paris is the first showing up in the ranking (~23M likes) (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.13).

#### **User engagement on Facebook worldwide**

During the fourth quarter of 2013, **Facebook likes accounted for 82% of user engagement with brand posts** (down from 87% in the corresponding quarter of the previous year); **comments accounted for only 10%** (up from 6%) and **shares for 8%** (up from 7%) (see Appendix 2 – Figure 2.14).

#### **Why customer engagement is important**

According to the institute of Customer Service, on average **65% of a company's business comes from existing customers.** It costs 5 to 10 times as much to attract a new customer than to keep an existing one. And engaged customers are at least 25% more valuable.

Nevertheless, **77% of customers say they do not want to engage with brands**. They believe relationships should be reserved for other people. (HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, 2012)

Despite this, **45% of the times customers will share a bad experience on social media, whereas 30% will share a good one**. (see Appendix 3 – Figure 3.3) According to the same survey, about two-thirds of the participants recalled reading online reviews (63% for negative and 69% for positive) (see Appendix 3 – Figure 3.4). Review sites were the most common place cited to read a negative review of customer service (39%) while Facebook was the most common place to read a positive review of customer service (44%) (DIMENSIONAL RESEARCH, 2013).

The volume of messages people send to brands on social media increased 21% worldwide from 2014 to 2015. During the same period, the number of messages in need of a response grew 110% to 4 out of 10 messages. (SPROUT SOCIAL INDEX, 2015). According to Zendesk, **40%** of customers switch loyalty because a competitor offers better customer service. Despite the fact that never before the responsibility to be responsive and engaged has been so critical, brands are not keeping up with this need. Their response time increased 4% in Q2 2015 and response rates decreased by 2.5%. Europe is leading in terms of response time (on average 10.5h) and it is also above the average in terms of response rate (12.3%). (see Appendix 3 – Figures 3.1 and 3.2)

**Social media has a determinant role in boosting brand awareness. But, it should also be considered a channel for providing online customer service.** The biggest problem with ignoring customers in social media is its visibility.

In every industry **brands post more than what they reply** (on average, 4 times as many posts as replies). According to another report by Bain & Company, brands that engage with customers via social earn an average **33 points** higher Net Promoter score<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Measure of consumer loyalty.

**A common mistake is frequently made when measuring social media engagement: more interactions do not necessarily define a better relationship.** According to a study, only 13% of the customers cited frequent interactions with a brand as a reason for having a relationship, whereas 64% cited shared values. (HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW, 2012)

### **Stages of the customer lifecycle – Where does social media come in?**

A company's marketing strategy should address each stage of the customer lifecycle – discover, explore, buy and engage. Social media can be a useful tool in most of these steps. During the first stage, when prospects are looking for the best product, a social media campaign is a very good way to build brand awareness; during the third stage, it is the best opportunity to reach out to customers via the channels they like best. The last stage is the most important. This is when a one-time customer converts into a loyal, life-long brand advocate. During this time the strategy should be to focus on customer retention and engagement. There are several ways to do it on social media, such as keeping customers updated on company news, product releases.

### **The role of Opinion Leaders (OL) in the marketing strategy**

Traditional (ie. offline) word of mouth is a well-known and effective marketing strategy. According to a McKinsey Study, marketing-inspired word-of-mouth generates more than twice the sales of paid advertising, and such customers have a 37% higher retention rate. Electronic word of mouth can be defined as “Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” (THURAU et al., 2004). With the growth of online discussion boards, social networks, online communities, review websites and blogs consumers can now connect with thousands of individuals (CHEUNG et al., 2008).

OLs represent a powerful group in the marketplace because they are able to influence consumers via word of mouth (STOKBERGER-SAUER & HOYER, 2009). An OL can (i) influence future purchase decisions and attitude formation (BERTRANDIAS & GOLDSMITH, 2006; LYONS & HENDERSON, 2005; GOLDSMITH & CLARK, 2008); (ii) increase the rate of diffusion of products and services (CHEUNG, LUO, SIA & CHEN); (iii) earn the trust of web users and help them perform a purchase-click online to purchase products and services (HSU & WANG); (iv) influence shopping trends (HERRING et al, 2005) and (v) signal product quality and attributes to influence potential adopters online (KOZINETTS et al, 2010), (SAMSON, 2010). Consumers who seek product recommendations from online sources select the recommended product twice as often as others who do not seek any recommendations. (SENECAL & NANTEL, 2004)

Influencer marketing can be loosely defined as a form of marketing that identifies and targets individuals with influence over potential buyers. (FORBES, 2014) A common mistake would be to identify influencers solely based on the number of followers. A better equation to consider is  $\text{Influence} = \text{Audience Reach (\# of followers)} \times \text{Brand Affinity (expertise and credibility)} \times \text{Strength of Relationship with Followers}$  (GLADWELL, M., 2000)

Social media is one of many channels for word-of-mouth. One of the advantages besides its reach is the fact that ROI can be measured more precisely and accurately.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to compare social media engagement generated between beauty OLs and beauty consumers and between beauty brands and beauty consumers, 10 beauty brands<sup>3</sup> (see Appendix 4 – Figure 4.1) and 10 OLs<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix 4 – Figure 4.2) were chosen and their Facebook pages were analyzed. For the purpose of this analysis, the definition of engagement taken into consideration was the one used by Facebook (considering the metrics that are publicly available – likes, comments and shares).

Facebook was the chosen platform as it is the most relevant social network at the moment in terms of reach and because it allows for the most diversity in terms of types of posts allowed (see Appendix 4 – Figure 4.3). A period of one year was considered (from 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016).

The 10 brands satisfy the following criteria: (1) offer skin care products and/or color cosmetics in the mass segment in Portugal; (2) own an institutional Facebook page written in Portuguese. The 10 beauty OLs satisfy the following criteria: (1) own a Facebook page with a minimum of 10.000 fans; (2) it is clear to the reader who is writing – the OL name and face is well known to the customer; (3) a nomination in the awards “Blogs do ano”<sup>5</sup>.

Each page was classified according to the number of page likes, the PTAT (people talking about this)<sup>6</sup> indicator and the number of posts made during the period under analysis. (see Appendix 4 – Figures 4.1 and 4.2)

<sup>3</sup> Avon, Benefit Cosmetics, Essie, Kiehl's, Kiko Milano, L'Oreal Paris, Make Up For Ever, Maybelline New York, Flormar and Inglot

<sup>4</sup> Coquette à Portuguesa, Devil Wears Louboutin, Glimmer le Blonde, Last Minute Dreams, Style it Up, Inês Franco – Maquilhagem e cabelos, Sempre na Moda, Inês Mocho Make up, Last Time Around, Sketchbook six La Petite

<sup>5</sup> Awards the best blogs in Portugal according to certain categories. Three of the selected OLs were nominated for the “Beauty category” (Sketchbook six, Style it up and Ines Franco) and one for the “vlogger” category (Inês Mocho).

<sup>6</sup> Number of unique users who have created a “story” about a page in the previous seven days. Hence, if a person leaves more than one comment or like it adds only one point. Stories are items that are in display in the news feed. Users create stories when: they like a page, post on the page wall, like a post, comment, share, answer a question, RSVP to a page's event, mention the page in a post (only counted when the page is tagged; the idea is to indicate how well a page is engaging fans and not simply how popular it is), tag the page in a photo, check in at a place, share a check in deal, like a check in deal, write a recommendation, claim an offer.

For the purpose of the analysis all the posts were typified according to the following:

- Date of the post: (day of the week, month and hour)
- Type: (1) album, (2) animated image share (3) avatar, (4) cover photo (5) event (6) life event (7) map (8) multi share,, (9) music aggregation, (10) note (11) photo (12) share (13) text (14) video inline (15) video share highlighted and (16) Youtube (see appendix 4 – Figure 4.3)
- Length of the post (number of characters)
- Content: (1) whether the post has written content or not; (2) whether there is a question or not.

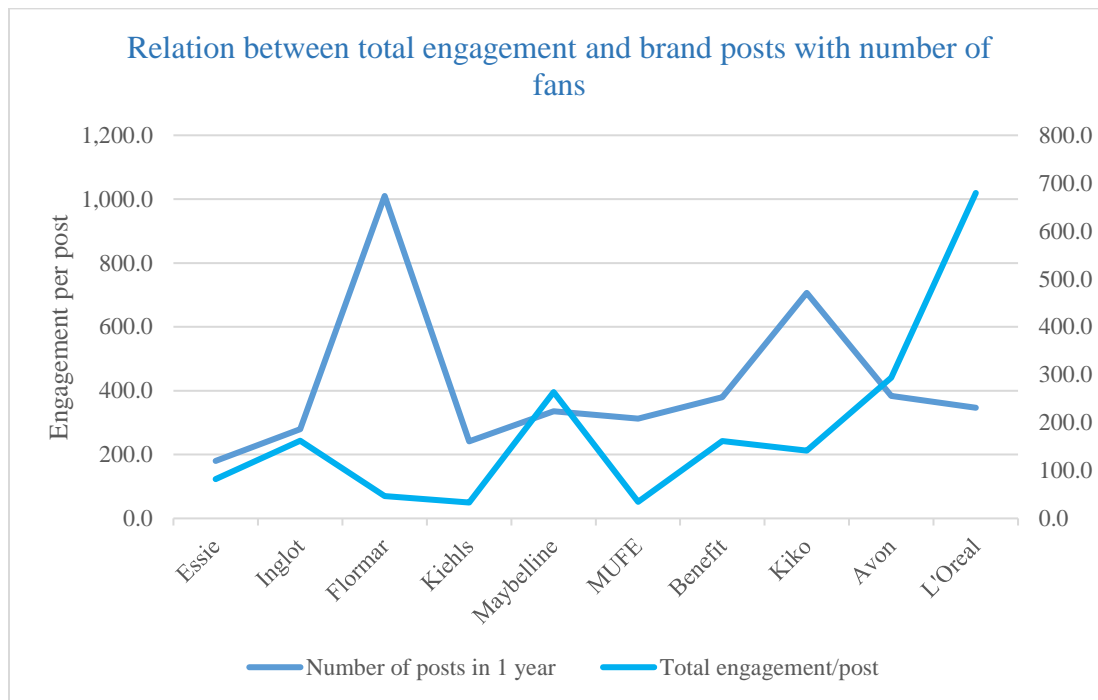
The first step in the analysis was to compare the different pages among their segment in order to understand if there were patterns among the two agents (brand or OL). The second step was to compare social media presence of the two agents (brands and OLs). In order to do so, the posts were analyzed in an aggregated manner independent of the specific OL or brand. Finally, a comparison between the engagement generated by OLs when making posts about the selected brands and the brands themselves was made. The criteria used to make the different comparisons were always the same (hereafter mentioned).

## RESULTS

### Analyzing the presence of beauty brands on Facebook in Portugal

For the considered time period, brands made 4,175 posts, an average of 417.5 posts a year and 1.1 posts per day. These posts generated a total engagement (sum of likes, comments and shares) of 724,338 or 173.5 per post.

It was not established any correlation between the number of page fans and the number of posts made per year nor between the number of page fans and the engagement generated per post was. This means that brands with more followers are not posting more or generating more engagement per post.



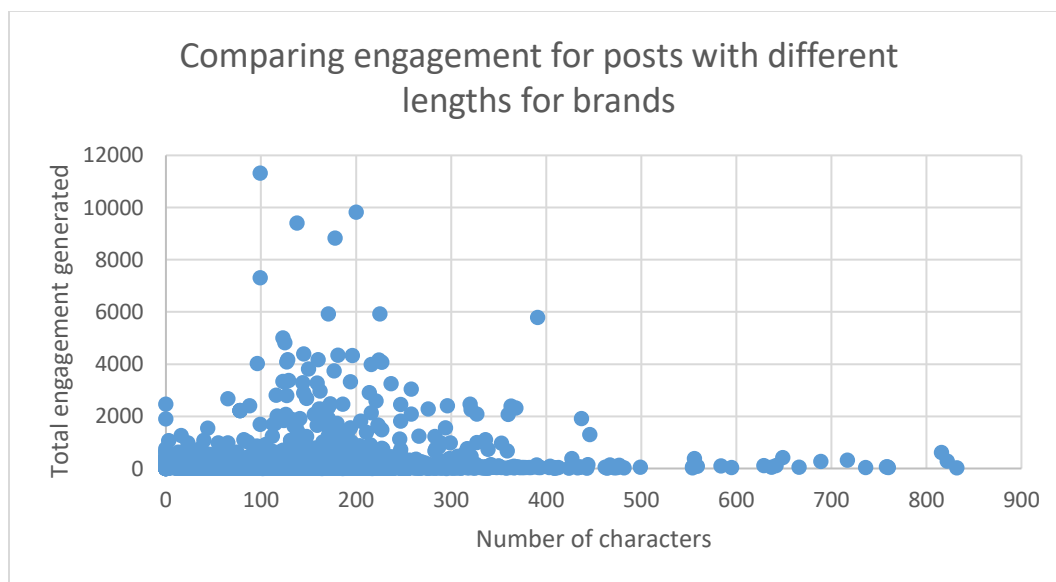
Note: The brands are presented in ascending order according to the number of page fans

No relevant pattern was registered among the Facebook pages owned by the different brands under analysis. Monday was the day when posts generated more engagement for more pages (3 pages); on the other side, the day when posts generated less engagement for more brands was Saturday (5 pages); the hour when posts generated more engagement for more pages was 9 AM (3 pages) whereas the hour when posts generated less engagement for more pages was also 9 AM (5 pages). April and February were the best months for more pages (2 pages for each month) July was the worst (5 pages).



When analyzing the presence of beauty brands on Facebook in an aggregated manner (independent of the brand), the following can be concluded: (i) people engage significantly more (about 88% more) with posts that have a written content; (ii) engagement is also higher with posts that contain a question (almost 26% more); (iii) the most engaging type of content is by far the “Animated image share”, followed by the “Video inline” (the first generating almost 76% more engagement per post than the second); (iv) the least engaging content is the “Avatar” (not very commonly used). From the 11 posts that did not generate any engagement, 10 were avatars; (v) the day of the week when posts generate more engagement is Tuesday whereas the worst day is Saturday, with the latter generating on average 80% less engagement than the former; (vi) the best time interval to post is from 11-12 AM and the worst from 7-9 PM; (vii) the month when posts generated more engagement was April whereas the month when posts generated less engagement was July. Despite this, July was the month registering more posts (an average of 44 posts per page). (see Appendix 5.1)

Most of the posts contained between 0 to 300 characters. From all the posts generating generating an engagement of 700 or higher, 92,5% had 50-400 characters



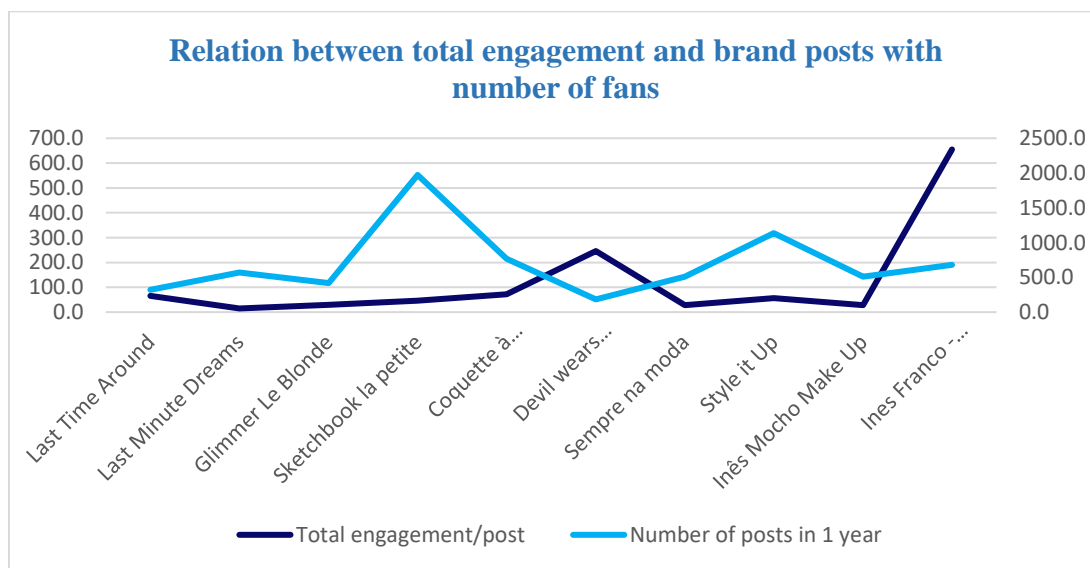
The post that led to more engagement among all the brand posts was made on April at 9PM and made use of celebrity endorsement (video posted by L’Oreal appearing Simone de Oliveira – a famous Portuguese actress and singer).

### Analyzing the presence of beauty OLs on Facebook in Portugal

For the considered period, the 10 agents made 7.173 posts which generated an overall engagement of 996.857 (sum of likes, comments and shares).

On average, OLs make 717 posts a year, almost 2 posts per day (72% more than the average registered for the brands being analyzed). On average each post generates an engagement of 139.0 (about 25% less engagement per post than the average for brands). If we take out the brand that generated more engagement (L’Oreal), the results are quite different with brands generating an engagement of only 127.6 per post, 9% less than the engagement achieved by brands per post.

There is no correlation between the number of page fans and the number of posts made per year nor between the number of page fans and the engagement generated per post.



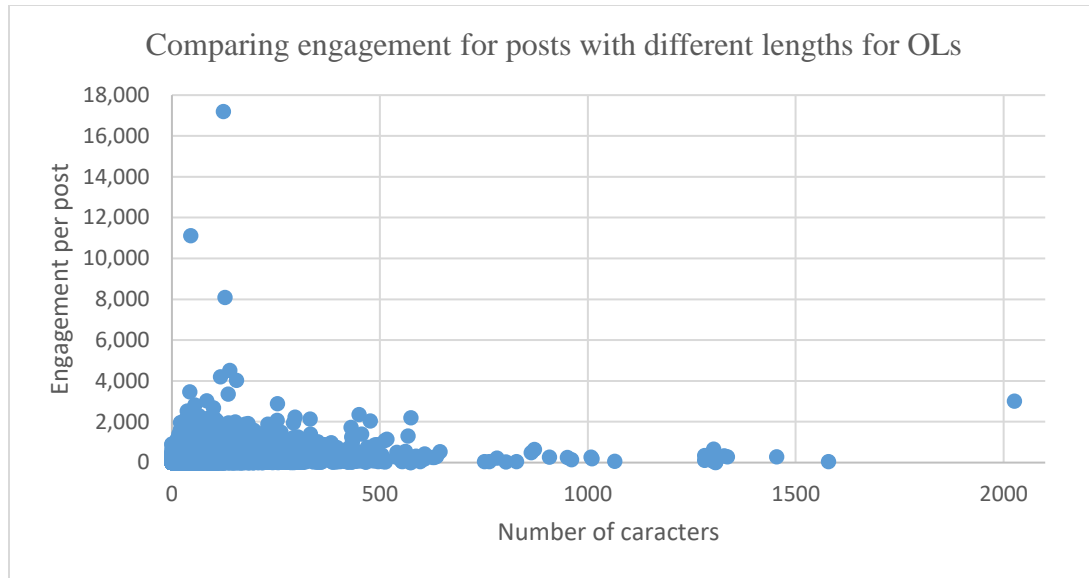
Note: The OLs are presented in ascending order according to the number of page fans

Beauty OLs with more fans are not posting more nor their posts are generating more engagement than OLs with less fans.

Once again, there does not seem to exist a pattern between the different Facebook pages of the OLs in study: the day of the week when posts generate more engagement for more pages was Saturday (3 pages); the day of the week when posts generate less engagement for more pages was also Saturday (5 pages); the top hour to post for more pages was 10 AM (2 pages) and the worst hour was 7 AM (2 pages). July was the best month in terms of engagement for 3 of the 10 pages (the worst for brands) whereas April was the worst month for 3 of the 10 pages (the best for brands).

When analyzing the presence of beauty OLs on Facebook in an aggregated manner (independent of the OL), the following can be concluded: (i) people engage significantly more (almost 238% more) with posts that have written content; (ii) they also engage more with posts that include a question (almost 70% more); (iii) the most engaging type of content is by far the *video inline*, followed by the *photo* (the first generating 112% more engagement). The least engaging content is the *music aggregation* (only used 3 times). From the 36 posts that did not generate any engagement, 12 were *avatars* and 12 were *shares*; (iv) the best day to post was Friday and the worst was Saturday (this conclusion is also valid for brands); (v) the best hour to post is from 9PM to 10PM and the worst is from 2AM to 3AM (there were just a few posts from 3AM to 7AM); (vi) The best month is June and the worst is May. (see Appendix 5.2)

The post that generated more engagement among all the brand posts was posted in January at 11:22AM. It was a photo and showed an appearance at a Portuguese television show. Most of the posts had 0-500 characters.



**Comparing the effect of different criteria on Facebook engagement with posts made by beauty brands and by beauty OLs in Portugal – General overview**

	OLs	Brands
<b>Is there any difference in engagement between posts with and without written content?</b>	Yes. Posts with written content generate almost 90% more engagement.	Yes Posts with written content generate almost 90% more engagement.
<b>Is there any difference in engagement between posts and without a question?</b>	Yes. Posts that include a question generate almost 70% more engagement.	Yes. Posts that include a question generate about 26% more engagement
<b>Most engaging type of post</b>	Video inline	Animated image share
<b>Least engaging type</b>	Music aggregation (only used 3 times). Video share highlighted	Avatar
<b>Best week day to post</b>	Friday	Tuesday
<b>Worst week day to post</b>	Saturday	Saturday
<b>Best hour to post</b>	9-10 PM	11-12 AM
<b>Worst hour to post</b>	2-3 AM	1 – 9 AM
<b>Best month to post</b>	June	April
<b>Worst month to post</b>	May	July

(See Appendix 5.3)

If we focus the analysis on the engagement rate per number of followers (total engagement/number of followers) we can conclude that OLs are much more engaged with their followers than brands.

With the exception of Essie, all the brands have an engagement rate below 0.05.

On average (considering all the brands) each fan interacted with the brand Facebook page 0.01 times in one year whereas on average (considering all the OL pages), OLs followers interacted with the page 1.5 times in one year and half of the pages registered a rate of 2 or above.

Finally, if we focus the analysis on the beauty OLs posts that mention one of the brands (leaving us with 260 posts in the time period under analysis and compare the engagement generated by them with the engagement generated by the brands the first is significantly superior (376.4 compared to 187.5).

## LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

### Limitations

The inconclusive results of this research may result from several factors. First of all, only the publicly available metrics to measure engagement were taken into consideration. For instance, the PTAT per post – which portrays a very accurate picture of the reach of a certain post and the number of people who viewed the post are only visible to the page owners. Moreover, it was not possible to compare whether brands and OLs were focusing more on engagement or on push strategies – in order to do so, one hypothesis could be to compare the number of replies with the number of posts.

### Further research

This thesis purpose was to understand the level of engagement generated by two agents (brands and OLs in one platform (Facebook). The focus was not on the specific products/brands being shown. Even though the results were inconclusive, this approach can be seen as a method that can be replicated to other social platforms (Instagram and Snapchat for example) and/or other countries.

Another line of research could be to change the focus to the brand instead of the platform, which could be achieved by selecting one brand and comparing level of engagement attained by different agents (brand or OL) across different platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat). This could help brands to better design the most effective social media strategy for them.

Finally, if we could have access not only to publicly available information another option could be to increase the levels of typification (for instance, the number of unique people engaged, the number of clicks per post, etc) in order to find patterns that could explain why people engage more with certain posts than with others.

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